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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Holiday Fire Safety**

***With the winter holidays coming up, one of the best gifts you can give your family is a safe home in which to celebrate the season.***

**Here are some tips to help your holiday be a happy, healthy one:**

**PICK A "SAFE" TREE.** If you're buying a cut tree for Christmas, check for freshness.

A fresh tree has a good green color and needles that are hard to pull from the branches and do not break. Shedding, brittle needles and a faded green color are signs of a dry tree.

Keep your tree fresh by placing it in a stand that holds water. Check the water level every day.

**ARTIFICIAL TREES SHOULD BE LABELED "FIRE RESISTANT".** This does NOT mean the tree won't catch fire—it does mean that the tree should resist burning and extinguish fairly quickly in the event of fire.

**PICK A SAFE PLACE FOR YOUR TREE.** Keep your tree out of traffic areas and away from doorways—exits should always be clear. Also, make sure there's a "safe zone" all around your tree—at least 3 feet away from fireplaces, wood stoves and other heat sources (candles included).

**DON'T OVERLOAD CIRCUITS.** With the extra lights and holiday decorations, don't be tempted to plug too many items into your outlets. Electrical overloads are among the most common causes of fires in the home. Unplug items that aren't in use, and **never** ignore a tripped fuse. Correct the situation at once. Replace them only with fuses of the correct amperage.

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**BEFORE THOSE LIGHTS GO UP:** Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. Don't forget to check your extension cords, too. Throw out any damaged lights or cords.

**WHETHER INDOOR OR OUTDOOR LIGHTS,** use only lights that have been **UL-approved**.

If the lights you're using haven't been tested by *Underwriters' Laboratories* or another national testing lab, you run a very real risk of fire—your lights haven't been manufactured in accordance with recognized safety standards.

**USE NO MORE THAN THE RECOMMENDED THREE STANDARD-SIZE SETS**

of miniature lights per single extension cord or outlet.

**NEVER RUN EXTENSION CORDS** through doorways, under rugs, or through any high-traffic areas. This can damage the insulation and wire inside, causing a fire hazard.

**ALWAYS DISCONNECT ALL DECORATIVE LIGHTS** before you go to bed or leave the house. Lights can short and cause a fire.

**DON'T HANG LIGHT STRINGS** in any way that might damage the cord's insulation. Never use nails or tacks. Use only insulated staples to hold strands in place, or run the strings through hooks.

**BE CAREFUL WITH CANDLES!** Always display candles safely by keeping them in stable, non-flammable holders. Don't use holders that are "top heavy" and will easily tip over. Keep these items away from materials that will burn (paper, plastic, fabric), such as other decorations, or curtains. Also keep them away from children and pets.

**FIREPLACE SAFETY:** **Never burn gift wrappings!** Flash fires can occur when gift wrap suddenly bursts into flame and burns intensely. Burning papers and other improper fuels in the fireplace is a major cause of chimney fires. **Always use a firescreen** to keep sparks from escaping onto nearby rugs, upholstered furniture or other combustibles. Before closing

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the flue, make sure the fire is out completely. When disposing of ashes, use a sealed **metal** container to transport the ashes.

#### **BE EXTRA CAREFUL WHEN SMOKING.**

Careless smoking is a leading cause of fire deaths at any time of the year, but the risk goes up during holiday parties and gatherings.

Check carefully for any smoldering smoking materials (between cushions, under furniture, etc.)

before going to bed. Smoking materials can smolder for hours—long after you’ve gone

to bed. Also, never smoke around the tree or flammable decorations.

#### **AS ALWAYS, KEEP MATCHES AND LIGHTERS AWAY FROM CHILDREN.**

Lock them up, as well as smoking materials. Children can’t protect themselves.

#### **HAVE A FIRE ESCAPE PLAN FOR YOUR HOME.**

Every member should know at least **two ways out** of each room. Pick a well-lit place, a safe distance from your home,

where everyone can meet in the event of a fire—for example, a tree, mailbox, or neighbor’s house.

REMEMBER: never return to a burning building for any reason. Your belongings can be replaced—you can’t!

#### **WORKING SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES.**

The holidays can bring increased risk of fire. **Having working smoke alarms in your home can double your chances of surviving a fire.**

If you haven’t changed the batteries in your smoke & carbon monoxide alarms this year, now is a good time. Now is also the time to vacuum the dust off the outside of your detectors, too. This will help keep them working effectively.

#### **WEBSITES TO SEE FOR MORE HOLIDAY SAFETY INFORMATION:**

[www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org); [www.homesafetycouncil.org](http://www.homesafetycouncil.org); [www.usfa.dhs.gov](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov); [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)

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